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# Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250-1340 (202) 720-4330

## Letter No. 2611

*The nation's first statewide system for issuing food stamp benefits electronically with a plastic card is observed by Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. At a ceremony in Laurel, Maryland, Secretary Espy said that the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program streamlines the food stamp and other benefits systems, and helps to reduce fraud. Espy noted EBT's advantages include bringing participants into the economic mainstream by providing them more control over their benefit accounts, and simplifies the accounting process for retailers, bankers and the federal government. USDA photo by Byron Schumaker.*



**MEAT INSPECTION HEARINGS** -- A series of hearings will be held to receive public comments on a new regulatory system for meat and poultry inspection. The hearings will be held nationwide and are scheduled for Dallas, TX, May 21; Seattle, WA, June 1; Des Moines, IA, June 4; Oakland, CA, June 9; Atlanta, GA, June 11; and Philadelphia, PA, June 18. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy encourages interested individuals and groups to give feedback on USDA efforts to modernize and reform the federal meat and poultry inspection system. **Contact: Steve Lombardi (202) 720-9113.**

**FOREST HEALTH** -- A new report calls for an updated approach to planning, implementing restoration efforts and maintenance of East-side forests in Oregon and Washington. The forests in eastern Oregon and Washington have high levels of insect infestation, disease, and fire losses. A panel of 112 scientists from universities, federal and state agencies, and private companies produced the five-volume publication that examines past management practices in the forests, suggests areas where more research is needed, and ways to apply the knowledge. USDA Forest Service chief Dale Robertson says the report will be used in reviewing forest management policies and decision making. **Contact: John Denne (202) 205-0974.**

**NATIONAL SCHOLARS** -- Forty-three high school students from across the nation will receive full funding for a four-year college program at the 1890 land-grant institutions. The 1890/USDA National Scholars Program will provide the students with full tuition, fees, books, equipment, and employment for each year while pursuing a bachelor's degree in agriculture, food or natural resource sciences. The 43 winners were selected from more than 2.7 million students expected to graduate from high school in 1993, and is the highest federal honor bestowed upon graduating high school seniors. It is the largest undergraduate scholarship program in USDA's history. **Contact: Cheryl Greaux (202) 720-6905.**

*The 4th annual Washington Ag Watch of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters was held May 16-18. Farm broadcasters from across the nation met with Secretary Espy and members of his new sub-cabinet team, Members of Congress, and foreign trade officials. With NAFB president Ken Tanner (WRAL/Tobacco Radio Network, Raleigh, NC) the events were assembled by Ag Watch chairman Randy Rasmussen (KMA, Shenandoah, IA). USDA photo by Ken Hammond.*



**PROTECTING THE SOIL** -- The Conservation Reserve Program, now in its eighth year, has temporarily retired from production over 36 million acres of highly erodible and sensitive cropland, 90 percent of the program's goal. Meanwhile, under the conservation compliance provisions of the 1985 farm bill, approved conservation plans have been fully applied on 86 million acres of highly erodible cropland, 58 percent of the total erodible acreage. Another 55 million acres have USDA approved plans that are in the process of implementation and certification. **Contact: Stan Daberkow (202) 219-0464.**

**BUY NOW** -- Farm interest rates are expected to continue their downward trend in the first half of 1993 before heading slightly upward in the second half and rising modestly in 1994. With interest rates expected to increase, farmers may benefit by financing purchases now rather than later. Farmers considering expanding their operations should note that farmland prices generally move in the opposite direction of interest rates because future income that can be earned is discounted by higher interest rates. **Contact: Ted Covey (202) 219-0892.**

**FARMLAND VALUE** -- How much is your land worth per acre? It depends on where you live. Average farm real estate values last year ranged from \$138 per acre in Wyoming to \$4,774 per acre in New Jersey. The value of U.S. farmland has increased by an average of 2.4 percent per year for the last five years. The area in farmland has fallen each year, from 1.2 billion acres in 1950 to 0.9 billion in 1992. The number of farms has also declined each year, from 5.6 million in 1950 to 2.1 million last year. These and other statistics are available in a new USDA publication "Farm Real Estate." \$12 per copy. Order by phone, 1-800-999-6779. **Contact: John Jones (202) 219-0428.**

**DIET RESULTS** -- Substituting stick margarine for corn oil increased the amount of saturated fat in test diets more than 20 percent, and resulted in a 10-fold increase in trans fatty acids. The study conducted at USDA's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston, MA, shows that the semisolid, hydrogenated fats found in stick margarine are less friendly to the heart than the oils from which they are produced. **Contact: Alice Lichtenstein (617) 556-3127.**

**HUMAN NUTRITION SYMPOSIUM** -- A symposium to identify priority needs and opportunities for the future, and an examination of the progress of human nutrition programs conducted by USDA, will be held in Washington, D.C., June 2-4. Cosponsored by USDA, the International Life Sciences Institute, and the American Institute of Nutrition, the event will feature 40 experts from federal government and academia at the W.O. Atwater Centennial Celebration Symposium. 1994 marks the 100th year of USDA food studies. **Contact: Diane Dalisera (202) 659-0789.**



## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

**AGRICULTURE USA #1876** -- USDA is not only revamping its meat inspection system to assure a safer product, but is also going to expand its food safety reach from the farm all the way to our tables. **Gary Crawford** looks at the plans for a new food safety system. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

**CONSUMER TIME #1358** -- A new food safety system; controlling pests on citrus trees; picnic safety; the art of eating artichokes; be kind to your tomato. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

**AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1868** -- USDA News Highlights; cotton payments; how much farmland is owned by foreigners; viruses threaten California grapes; a different way of tracking farm income. (Weekly reel of news features.)

**NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1621** -- Chinese wasp kills aphids; viral vectors threaten citrus; variform virus; fantastic fungus; redefining biocontrol. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

**UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** -- Wednesday, May 26, cotton/wool outlook; Thursday, May 27, export outlook, world tobacco situation; Friday, May 28, ag income outlook, ag prices. **DUE TO MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY THE NEWSLINE WILL NOT CHANGE UNTIL 5:00 p.m. TUESDAY, JUNE 1.** Tuesday, June 1, horticultural exports, world sugar situation; Wednesday, June 2, crop/weather update; Thursday, June 3, Western hemisphere outlook. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

**USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.**  
*Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.*

## FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

**FEATURES** -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on Secretary **Espy's** meeting at USDA headquarters with farm broadcasters. **Lynn Wyvill** reports on food safety tips for grilling meat and poultry.

**ACTUALITIES** -- Secretary of Agriculture **Mike Espy** on NAFTA, and USDA's farm income measurement; USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on weather and crop progress; USDA economist **Leland Southard** on the latest livestock and poultry statistics.

**UPCOMING FEATURES** -- **DeBoria Janifer** reports on the experimental food crop purslane; **Pat O'Leary** reports about the Mississippi River Project on water quality; and **Lynn Wyvill** reports on beta carotene and health.

**EVERY OTHER WEEK** -- **Agriculture Update** with anchors **Eric Parsons** and **Lori Spiczka**. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

*Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.*

## OFFMIKE

**WE WERE QUACKING LIKE DUCKS**...until the weather broke, says **Al Carstens** (KATE, Albert Lea, MN). Farmers rushed into the fields to get planting underway. Al says they used 12 and 16-row planters to put corn in the ground without first running anhydrous. Producers plan to sidedress later. Conditions exist for the crop to have a great start.

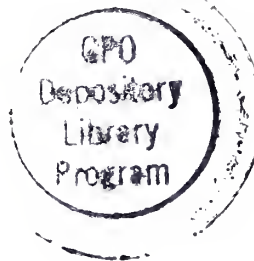
**SOIL STEWARDSHIP WEEK**...April 25 to May 1, was observed with a special half-hour program says **Bob Cockrum** (Texas Agribusiness Network, Dallas). It included a look back to 1933 at the height of the dust bowl days, then reviewed projects, federal programs and research to control loss of soil. Interviews with Extension specialists and scientists at a wind research laboratory were also featured. The network fed the program several times for stations to record and air. Bob notes that producers finally got on schedule with planting after delays caused by wetness and cool temperatures. The only producers behind are rice growers along the coast.

## *Farm Broadcasters Letter*



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**NEWSLETTER AND TV REPORTS**...on farm safety targeted to producers are available from **Judy Oskam** (Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension, Stillwater, FAX 405-744-6059). The effort has received funding from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. An item in the spring newsletter, *Health & Safety*, notes that agriculture is one of the nation's most hazardous occupations, having 50 deaths per 100,000 workers compared to an annual rate of 11 for all industries combined, nearly five times the rate for industry. The materials show that small steps a producer can take will enhance safety, can add up and thereby improve the rate.

**CONGRATULATIONS**...to **Shelly Beyer** (Linder Farm Network, Willmar, MN). She won a fellowship sponsored by the National Press Foundation to attend a seminar on the environment to be held in Washington, D.C., May 23-26. Shelly was one of only 15 journalists selected nationwide to attend this first seminar. The group will hear from environmental experts, industry and government representatives on subjects such as hazardous waste, pesticides, food safety, water pollution, endangered species, and the clean air act.

**VIC POWELL**   
Chief, Radio & TV Division